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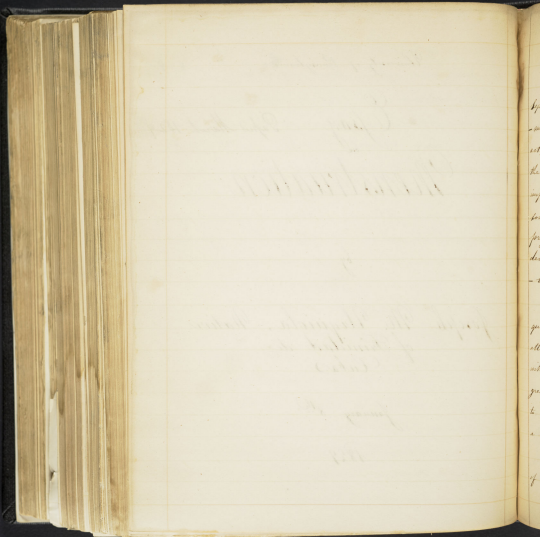
Menstruation

by

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of Trinidad de  
Cuba

January 8<sup>th</sup>

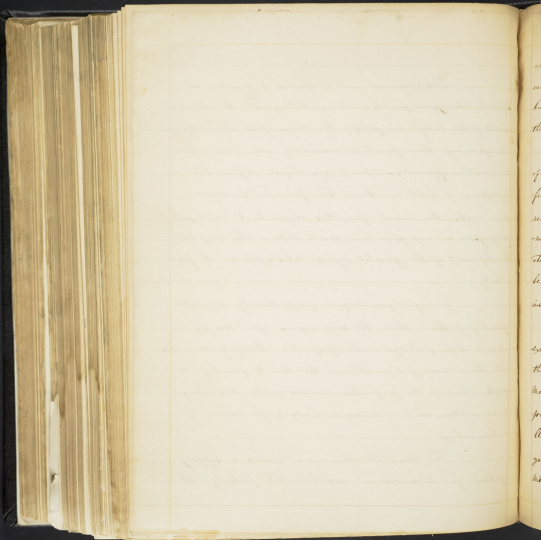
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Each organ of one sex assumes its function at separate successive periods - Thus, sitting aside the development of the Embryo and foetus, the lungs first begin to act, assuming their function immediately after birth; then the digestive apparatus - Some days elapse before the impressions of light and sound are perceived - After some weeks the mental faculties begin to be developed; progression and expression occur much later - The complete development of the genital organs takes place at puberty.

Genital organs require proportionally a greater quantity of blood than the same organs after having attained their full size - The proportion therefore diminishes with the increase of size, although the absolute quantity be greater; and if the proportion remains greater it is owing to an irritation, which in mucous membranes is often relieved by a hæmorrhage.

The Uterus, like other organs, receives a supply of blood for its increase and renewal until puberty, at

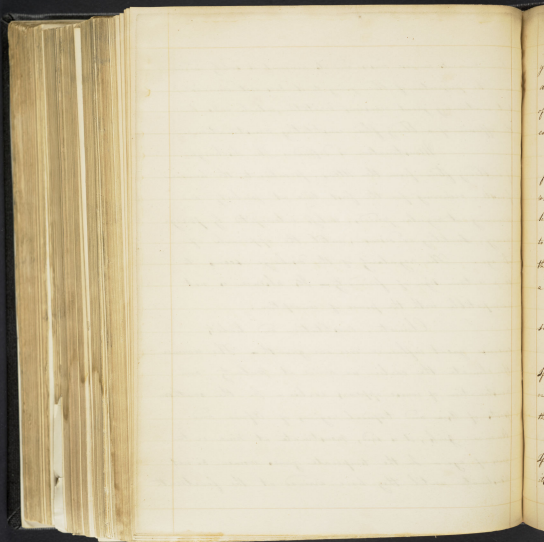




which time its increase ceases and its renewal is solely carried on - The proportion of blood going to it does not diminish, but continuing great occasional irritation, which ends in the effusion of a bloody fluid constituting menstruation.

Menstruation is defined - The discharge of a bloody fluid from the uterus, peculiar to the human female, occurring for the first time at puberty and recurring at regular periods, unless interrupted by pregnancy, suckling or disease, until the approach of old age. The regularity of the discharge seems to be a certain sign of femininity - Its absence is not incompatible with the power of conception.

Climate, constitution and habits exercise great influence over our growth - The warmer the climate the earlier we arrive at puberty and menstruation of course appears earlier - In the southern parts of Asia and tropical regions of Africa and America, girls, it is said, menstruate at nine or ten years of age - In the temperate zones women do not menstruate until they have arrived at the fourteenth



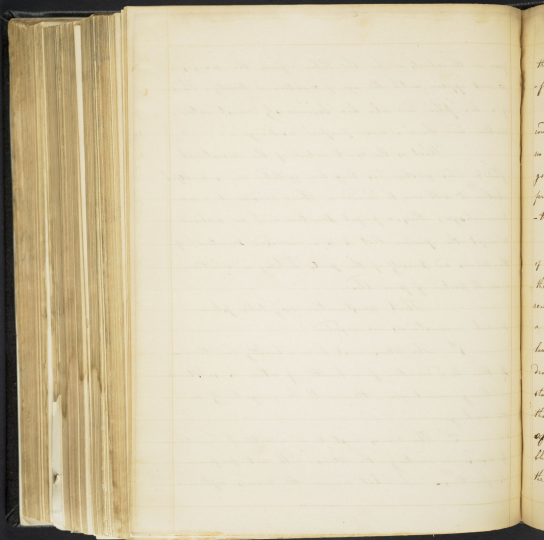
year or thereabouts - In the Polar regions the menses  
do not appear until the age of eighteen or twenty. Those  
of a lax fibre and who live luxuriously menstruate  
earlier and have a more profuse discharge.

What is the exact nature of the menstrual  
fluid? This question has long been agitated and is doubtful  
whether it will ever be decided - Some consider it a mere  
haemorrhage; others, a perfect secretion - I am inclined  
to adopt the opinion that it is an increased secretion of  
the mucus and serosity of the parts taking in solution  
a small portion of pure blood.

That menstruation may take place  
several circumstances are required

1<sup>st</sup> The Uterus must be in a healthy condition -  
If there be a deviation from health of either its substance  
or lining membrane, there will be irregularity in  
the discharge

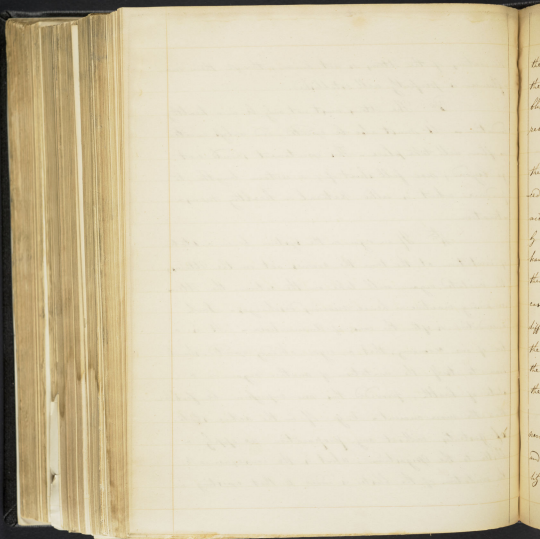
2<sup>nd</sup> The ovaries must be in a natural condition -  
If diseased or wanting, the Uterus will not perform  
its functions - In what manner the ovaries influence



the action of the Uterus is not known, though their influence is perfectly well established.

3<sup>o</sup> The Uterus must not only be in a healthy condition - It must also be excited, and unless excited no flow will take place - This excitement should not go beyond, nor fall short of, a certain length to produce what is called Natural or healthy menstruation.

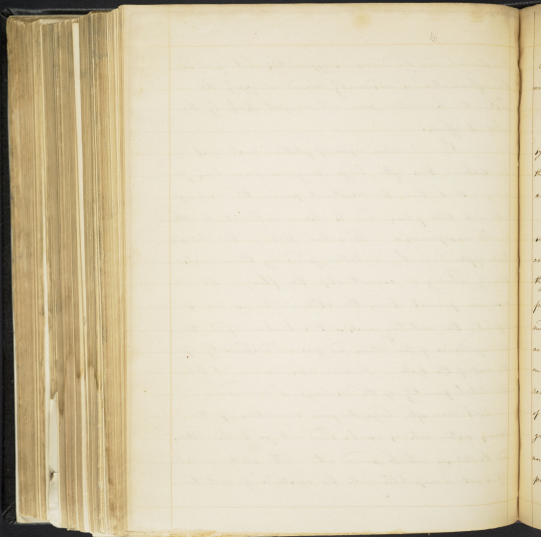
4<sup>o</sup> If an organ in the system be in a state of irritation at the time the ovaries act on the Uterus, the irritated organ will take on the action, the Uterus remaining inactive - hence various discharges - Such a condition is often the cause of Amenorrhoea - It is a law of our economy, that an organ, already excited, should draw to itself the irritation of another organ in a state of health, provided this new impression be feebler than the more ancient - v. g. If in the active state of gestation, without any preparation we apply a blister to the Epigastrium, what is the consequence? the irritation of the blister is added to that existing in



the stomach and the disease is aggravated; but if when the inflammation is considerably reduced, we apply the blister, then its revulsive power will manifest itself by the relief it affords.

5<sup>th</sup> A certain degree of plethora must exist in the system; thus after large sanguine evacuations preceding a short time the menstrual period, the discharge will not take place, and its absence will not be attended by ill consequences. It is true that if the Menstr. have appeared, or the irritation preceding them exists; then by bleeding we cannot stop the flow in the one case nor prevent it in the other. The case here is different, the irritation exists - it is local - confined to the capillaries of the Uterus and goes on independently of the rest of the system. In such cases, however, I believe the total quantity of the discharge is diminished.

But even after large sanguine evacuations if the nervous system acts as usual, blood will go to the Uterus and the Menstr. will be poured out. The state of debility is not incompatible with the existence of irritation.



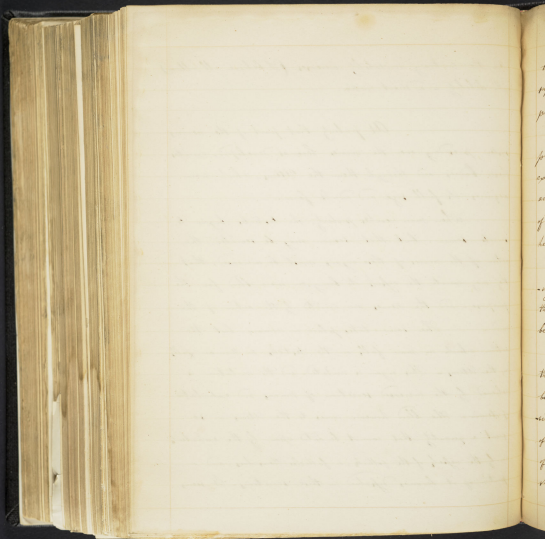


On the contrary irritability increases (I believe all allow)  
with debility in a direct ratio.

At puberty that part of the nervous  
system presiding over the ovaries becomes developed, excites  
these bodies and through them the Uterus, which now  
acquires its full size and adult form.

When man reaches puberty, the testicles begin to  
secrete semen; but that semen may be secreted, the  
action of the nerves of these organs must be increased, that  
they may excite the vessels to bring on more blood for the  
purpose - and the nerves are excited by the action of the  
sperm.

The same takes place in woman - but the  
action which in man falls on the testicles in woman falls  
on the Uterus - This organ is irritated - and the irritation is  
relieved by the increased secretion of menses and exhalation  
of semen - The blood however comes to the Uterus in so  
great a quantity that cannot be acted upon by the exhalants  
and by the vessels of the follicles, or follicles themselves, and a  
portion of it becomes deposited in these secretions - It seems

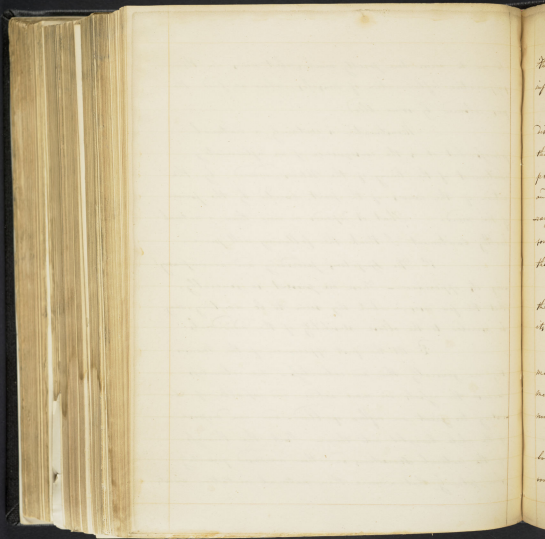


to me to occur here pretty much, what occurs in the  
suppurative inflammation of muscles, where we find the  
pus coloured by some blood.

Menstruation is certainly a natural  
process; but it is the consequence of an inflammatory  
excitement of the lining of the Uterus, induced by the  
action of the nerves of the part, excited by the power  
of the mind. That it depends on more than a natural  
healthy excitement I think the following will prove.

1<sup>st</sup> The symptoms preceding and accompa-  
-nying its appearance - These are present so generally,  
that the few cases, in which they seem to be wanting, may  
be ascribed to the obtuse sensibility of the individuals -

2<sup>d</sup> At the first appearance of the Menstrues,  
they are generally thin and colourless - the colourless  
because the vessels are more active and capable of re-  
-sisting too great an influx of blood - and can dispose  
of the whole brought into them - But the thinness  
of the natural secretion, and their increased quantity  
show plainly, that a more than natural irritation exists.



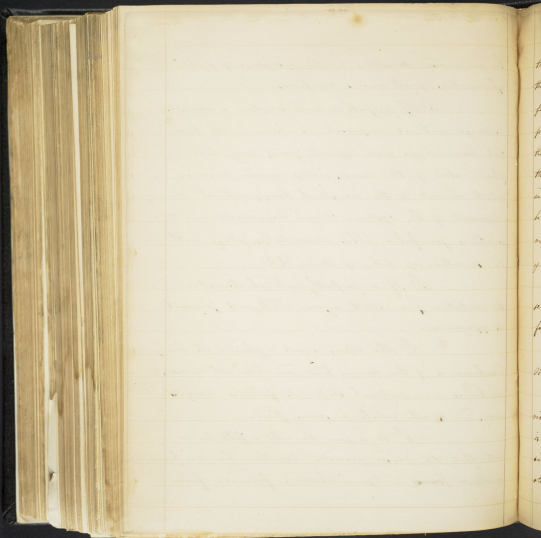
Thin and increased secretions are the consequence of slight inflammations of all mucous Membranes.

3<sup>d</sup>. If perfectly natural secretion a vicarious discharge could not compensate its absence. We know that haemorrhages from different parts may take place instead of the Menstr, keep regular periods, and be obedient to the menstrual laws, without derangement of the System, though disagreeable and sometimes painful. This never takes place with the secretion of bile, of Urine &c.

4<sup>th</sup>. If a perfectly natural secretion the irritation of a distant organ would not prevent its appearance.

5<sup>th</sup>. The Uterus is not a gland. Its lining membrane is of the mucous kind, and like all mucous membranes, in a natural state, its follicles secrete mucus and its villi exude a serous fluid.

6<sup>th</sup>. It is from the villi or follicles - both that the Menstrs proceed. By them the Membrane sometimes found in Dysmenorrhoea is formed - from

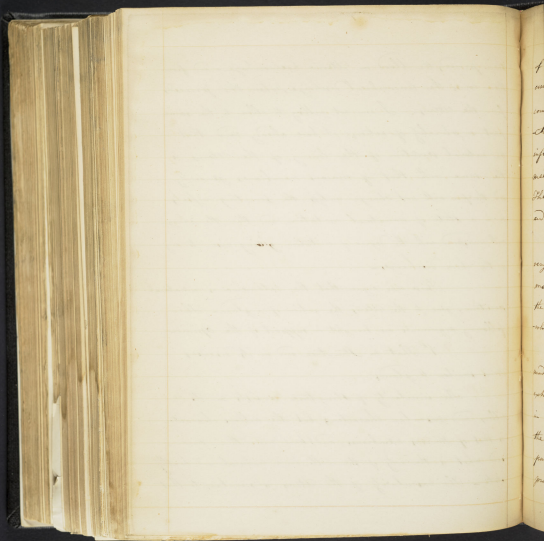


then proceeds the blood in Uterine haemorrhage - and from  
them comes the leucorrhoeal discharge, when this proceeds  
from the Uterus. I am not willing to allow to the same  
part a plurality of actions. I have already said that  
the natural secretion of the lining of the Uterus is  
the same with that of mucous membranes generally  
and therefore will not change unless the secreting vessels  
be in a state of unnatural irritation and then the change  
will correspond with the degree of irritation, giving rise to any  
of the above discharges -

Those who argue that the catamenia is a natural  
secretion, give to the Uterus the action of a gland - The  
following arguments are brought in support of the Opinion

1<sup>st</sup> That in Structure and in its diseases  
it is similar to glands

The similarity of structure consists in its  
villous and vascular character; but the villous character  
is that of mucous membranes, and I have more than once  
said what is the duty of the villi in a natural and healthy  
state - The vascularity of the Uterus is similar to that

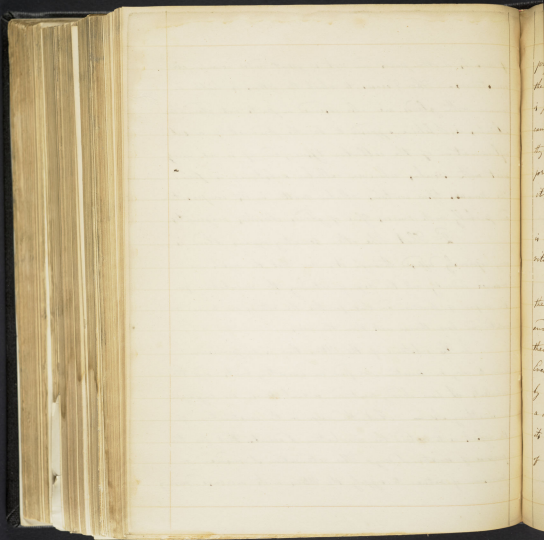




of vessels in other parts and not so great under common circumstances. The diseases, to which the Uterus is liable in common with glands, are also observed in parts not glandular. Scirrhos is, I believe, supposed to be the product of a sub-inflammation of the cellular tissue; and if so, we may meet with scirrhos wherever cellular substance is found. The mucous tissue contains cellular matter in its composition and probably in the mucous tissue of glands, Scirrhos originates.

2<sup>d</sup> That like other secretory organs blood is very copiously diffused through it, and that the vessels are arranged indirectly with the design of retarding the circulation for the purpose of secretion and that for this the arteries are larger, convoluted and have thinner coats than the veins.

In the substance of the Uterus there is no provision made to carry on secretion, we find no excretory ducts - and the vessels, all have already mentioned, several times, are engaged in something else - That the design in the construction of the vessels is to retard the circulation I admit - that for the purpose of secretion I deny - The retardation I consider a provision of nature to supply the Uterus in its increase during

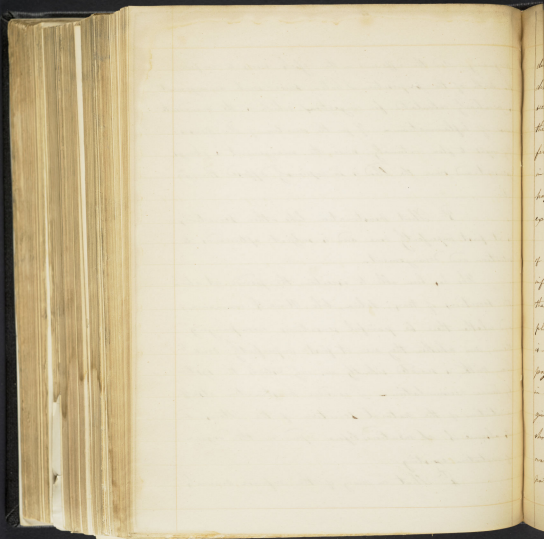


pregnancy - And the difference in the vessels serves to confirm the truth of the proposition I hold - since such arrangement is peculiarly calculated for congestions, which is the immediate cause of inflammation - If for the secretion of the Menstrum they ought to flow continually, since the arrangement is always present - and since the blood is so copiously diffused through it -

3<sup>d</sup> That menstruation like other secretions, is at first imperfectly done and is subject afterwards to vitiation - and derangement -

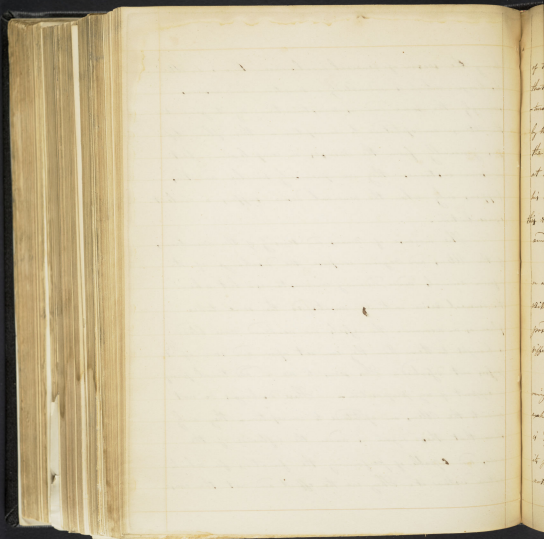
Who has been able to ascertain the periods at which the secretions of tears, saliva, bile, Urine & co. commence; and whether there be painful sensations accompanying them; and whether they are at first imperfectly done? Even milk is secreted silently and only disturbs the system by undue accumulation - I consider menstruation itself a vitiation of the natural secretion of the Uterus, and its absence if I mentioned before depend on the degree of vitiation existing -

4<sup>th</sup> That in many of the inferior animals



during the season of general incubance, there is an Uterine discharge, which is undoubtedly a secretion and answers seemingly the same end as menstruation: viz. to give to the Uterus an aptitude to conception - this fluid differs generally from the Menstrues in composition; but in some instances they are precisely similar, and this happens only when the general desire suffers a violent exacerbation.

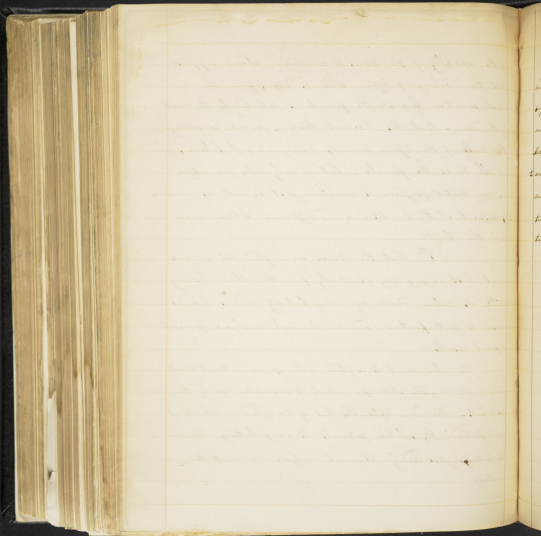
The increase of Venous and serous of the Membranes, of the Uterus and Vagina compose the Discharge of the inferior animals under ordinary circumstances - but when the general desire continually unsatisfied the same takes place as in woman - the vessels are weakened, more blood is brought to them than they can act upon and some of it passes out impured - This seems to me an additional proof in support of my proposition - These discharges do not give to the Uterus an aptitude to conception - they only show that this organ is under the influence of the virus and capable of performing the functions for which nature destined it. They are the effect and not the cause



of the capability of the Uterus to conceive. Some suppose that the Discharge of inferior animals differs from the natural secretion because the female is detected by the male by the odour - But this I do not think is proper reasoning - the male of the inferior animals distinguish, I believe, at all times the female; but he only takes her when his own erotic passion is excited - just so with us - and in this respect, I think, there is no difference between man and the brute.

5<sup>th</sup>. That the Menstrues are a fluid sui generis or at least varying very essentially from the blood, having neither its colour, odour nor coagulability and is left disposed to putrefaction - and on Chemical analysis present different results.

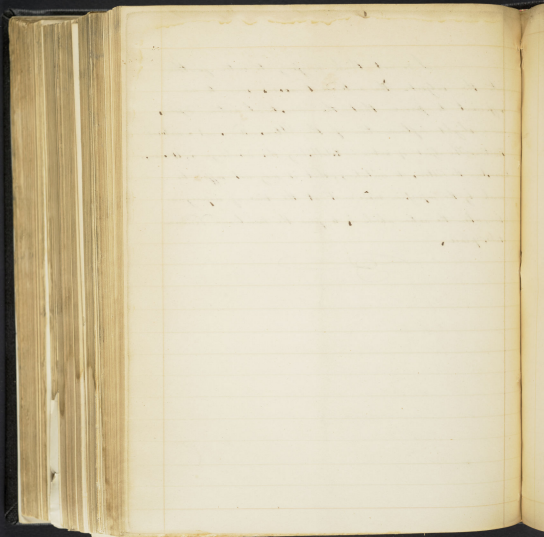
The colour cannot be so fluid as the proper arterial blood owing to the coagulated state from which it was taken up by the exhalants. The odour resembles that of the fluid in which it is dissolved. Its solution prevents its coagulating, and also its putrefying so readily - Chemical analyses are next to nothing.





I do not think necessary to enter further  
into the subject. The antecedent reasons seem to me  
sufficient to prove that the Menstrual action depends  
on a slight inflammation of the Uterus and is not a natural  
function. The object of nature in establishing this discharge is, it seems,  
to accustom the Uterus to irritation, that it may not suffer too  
much by the impregnation made in it at the time of impregna-  
tion, when the action which is to form the Membrana Vesicularis  
takes place.





No 5

47 South 8th

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Passed March 3<sup>d</sup>  
1828

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1808